

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /026 W
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FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2069

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY SANAA

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEHRAN 2867

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, IR, SA

SUBJECT: SAUDI- IRANIAN COOPERATION -- THACHER DISCUSSION WITH
FARTASH

REF: A. JIDDA 1618 (NOTAL)

B. STATE 75780 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR THACHER DURING HIS CALL ON MFA UNDER SEC FOR
POLITICAL AFFAIRS MANOUCHEHR FARTASH APRIL 25 GAVE HIM THOROUGH
BRIEFING ON SAUDIA ARABIA. HE SPOKE OF ENCOURAGING ELEMENTS OF
SAUDI ARABIAN EVOLUTION, THE RECOGNITION OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS
TO GIVE SUPPORT TO THREATENED STATES IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA ANDD
REVIEWED SAUDI ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN STRENGTHENING ITS TIES WITH
PERIPHERAL COUNTRIES. HE STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF SOUND UAE- SAUDI
RELATIONS AS FACTOR IN PERSIAN GULF STABILITY. AMBASSADOR
THACHER EXPRESSED OPTIMISM AS TO FUTURE DURABILITY OF PRESENT
SAUDI SYSTEM. FARTASH SPOKE ON THE GOOD IRANIAN- SAUDI RELATIONS
AND HIS FEELING BOTH SIDES DESIRED STRENGTHEN THESE FURTHER.
SPEAKING OF SAUDI MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO YEMEN AND OMAN, THACHER
SUGGESTED IRANIAN AMBASSADOR IN JIDDA TAKE MATTER UP WITH PRINCE
SULTAN. THIS COULD BE POSSIBLY FOLLOWED, HE SUGGESTED, BY QUIET
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VISIT OF SENIOR IRANIAN MILITARY FIGURE. FARTASH RESPONDED APPROACH WOULD BE GIVEN CAREFUL ATTENTION. FARTASH WHO LISTENED ATTENTIVELY EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THACHER' S ASSESSMENT AND AFFIRMED IRAN' S DESIRE FOR CLOSER SAUDI RELATIONS. END SUMMARY

1. AMBASSADOR THACHER CALLED ON MANUCHEHR FARTASH, UNDERSECRETARY FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS, TO EXPLORE FURTHER PROSPECTS FOR SAUDI-IRANIAN COLLABORATION AND DO WHAT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE IMPROVE IRANIAN UNDERSTAND OF SAUDI ARABIA, HOPEFULLY TO MITIGATE IN SOME DEGREE UNDERLYING DISCORDANT ELEMENTS DESCRIBED PARA 4 REFTEL B (KHALATBARI WAS OUT OF TEHRAN).

2. RE SAUDI INTERNATIONAL POSTURE THACHER SAID HE FOUND NUMBER OF ENCOURAGING ELEMENTS IN EVOLUTION OF SAUDI VIEWPOINT. WHILE IT HAD TAKEN SAUDIS SOME TIME REACH NECESSARY CONCLUSIONS YET IT CLEAR NOW THEY RECOGNIZE NEED THEIR ASSUMING SUBSTANTIAL PART OF BURDEN FOR SUPPORT OF THREATENED STATES ON PENINSULA PERIPHERY WHICH CONSTITUTE SAUDI ARABIA' S FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE. TOTAL OF SAUDI ECONOMIC AID TO NORTH YEMEN NOW APPROACHING \$80 MILLION IN GRANTS AND SOFT LOANS. SAUDIS NOW CONSIDERING HOW THEY SHOULD MEET YAR' S URGENT REQUIREMENTS FOR MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING. SOVIETS HAD STOPPED SUPPLY OF SPARE PARTS WHICH LEFT MUCH YEMENI MILITARY EQUIPMENT UNUSABLE. THERE WAS PROBLEM WITH HEAVY WEAPONS SUCH AS AIRCRAFT AND ARMOR BUT MORE URGENT NEED IS FOR MACHINE GUNS, OTHER TYPES SMALL ARMS, TRUCKS, ETC. SAUDIS NOW MOVING FORWARD WITH THEIR ASSESSMENTS ON ALL THESE MATTERS AND WE ENCOURAGING THEM UNDERTAKE PROMPT ACTION.

3. THACHER NOTED PRINCE SULTAN' S RECENT VISIT TO OMAN HAD LED TO SAUDI DECISION PROVIDE SOME \$22 MILLION IN ECONOMIC AID, THOUGH WE STILL UNCLEAR AS TO LENGTH OF TIME OVER WHICH THIS TO BE SUPPLIED OR TYPE OF PROJECT TO BE SUPPORTED. SIMILARLY SAUDIS HAVE DECIDED IN PRINCIPLE STEP UP MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND ARE PREPARED PAY FOR PURCHASE SOME KINDS OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT. TURNING TO GULF REGION THACHER MENTIONED PROSPECTIVE OTAIBA-YAMANI TALKS, PURPOSES AND NATURE OF WHICH FARTASH SEEMED FULLY AWARE. HE EXPRESSED VIEW SOUND UAE- SAUDI RELATIONS COULD BE IMPORTANT FACTOR FAVORING GULF STABILITY.

4. TURNING TO SAUDI PROBLEMS WITH IRAQ, THACHER DECLARED SAUDIS
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FOUND THEMSELVES TEMPORARILY AT DISADVANTAGE AND CONSEQUENTLY IN VERY CAUTIOUS FRAME OF MIND. BECAUSE OF RECENT AGGRESSIVE POSTURE PDRY, MOST OF SAUDI HEAVY EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING AIRCRAFT, NOW ON WESTERN SIDE OF PENINSULA. SAUDI AIR FORCE IS CAUGHT JUST AT POINT WHERE IT HAS PHASED OUT AGEING AND USELESS F-86 S

AND HAS NOT YET BROUGHT NEW F-5 S UP TO FULLY OPERATIONAL STATUS. IRAQIS MEANWHILE HAVE MAINTAINED DRUMFIRE OF RADIO AND PRESS ATTACKS ON SAUDI ARABIA AND HAVE THROWN SAUDIS OFF BALANCE BY GESTURES ALONG BORDER INCLUDING MOVEMENT OF TROOPS, BUILDING OF PILLBOXES, ETC. THACHER REVIEWED BRIEFLY FOR FARTASH RECENT HISTORY OF SAUDI RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES ON THEIR PERIPHERY, NOTING GENERALLY CONSTRUCTIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN STRENGTHENING TIES WITH SYRIA, EGYPT, SUDAN, ETHIOPIA, ETC.

5. FARTASH ASKED FOR APPRAISAL SAUDI INTERNAL SITUATION. THACHER RESPONDED WITH LISTING OF FAVORABLE FACTORS INCLUDING STRENGTH PROVIDED BY ROYAL FAMILY MODERNIZATION THROUGH WESTERN EDUCATION MANY YOUNGER MEMBERS, OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROFITABLE EMPLOYMENT OF GROWING MIDDLE CLASS, LACK OF IMPORTANT EXTERNAL POLITICAL FORCE (SUCH AS NASSER HAD CONSTITUTED) TO STIR DISCONTENT AMONG RISING SAUDI MIDDLE CLASS OR YOUNG OFFICERS, ETC. ONE HAD TO BE REALISTIC AS TO OVERALL STRENGTH OF SAUDI ESTABLISHMENT BUT ON BALANCE WE WERE QUITE OPTIMISTIC AS TO FUTURE DURABILITY OF PRESENT SAUDI SYSTEM WHICH ENJOYS CONSIDERABLE RESPECT BECAUSE OF FIRM ROOTS IN HISTORY AND TRADITION.

6. FARTASH COMMENTED ON GENERALLY GOOD STATE OF SAUDI- IRANIAN RELATIONS AND HIS FEELING BOTH SIDES DESIRED MOVE AHEAD STRENGTHEN THESE FURTHER. DIFFICULTY SEEMED TO BE SAUDIS MOVED TOO SLOWLY.

7. SAUDI BUREAUCRACY AND LEADERSHIP CERTAINLY CONTAINED ELEMENTY OF PASSIVITY AND INERTIA AND PATIENCE REQUIRE IN GETTING RESPONSES, THACHER NOTED. HE REMARKED ON KHALATBARI' S HAVING DISCUSSED WITH AMBASSADOR HELMS DIFFICULTIES OF DISCOVERING FROM SAUDIS PRECISELY WHAT THEY HAD DONE OR PLANNING TO DO IN REGARD MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR YEMEN AND OMAN. ONE PROBLEM WAS THAT SAUDIS OWN IDEAS STILL EMBRYONIC. THACHER SUGGESTED IRANIAN AMBASSADOR IN JIDDA (WHO ENJOYS GREAT RESPECT THERE) MIGHT TAKE MATTER UP WITH PRINCE SULTAN.

ALL FAISAL' S ADVISORS PLAY SIGNIFICANT ROLE BUT WE HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED BY DECISIVENESS PRINCE SULTAN AND HIS INFLUENCE WITH KING. SULTAN PLAYED HIGHLY IMPORTANT PART NOT
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ONLY IN MILITARY MATTERS VIS- A- VIS YAR AND OMAN BUT IN DETERMINATION OVERALL SAUDI GOVERNMENT POLICY. THACHER SAID DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVE

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /026 W

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R 261000 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2070

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMSXBASSY AMMAN 602

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSYHABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY SANAA

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EXDIS

BY IRANIAN AMBASSADOR RAED MIGHT THEN BE FOLLOWED UP, DEPENDING ON SAUDI RESPONSE, BY QUIET VISIT OF SENIOR IRANIAN MILITARY FIGURE WHO COULD PURSUE FURTHER PERHAPS DISCUSSIONS WITH PRINCE SULTAN. FARTASH AWARE PROBLEM KHALATBARI HAD MENTIONED AND SAID SUGGESTED APPROACH WOULD BE GIVEN CAREFUL CONSIDERATION.

8. THACHER EMPHASIZED AGAIN OUR BELIEF THAT WORKING LEVEL APPROACHES
FOCUSSING ON TANGIBLE MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST OFFERED MOST PRODUCTIVE LINE FOR STRENGTHENING SAUDI- IRANIAN TIES. SAUDI ARABIA REMAINS AS IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN CONCERNED ABOUT ITS POSITION VIS- A- VIS OTHER ARABS AND ACCORDINGLY WILL BE HAPPIEST WITH LOW- KEY ATTENTION TO PRACTICAL, TANGIBLE MATTERS ON WHICH HOPEFULLY
COMMON USEFUL UNDERSTANDINGS CAN BE DEVELOPED.

9. FARTASH, WHO HAD NOTE- TAKER PRESENT, LISTENED ATTENTIVELY TO ALL FOREGOING AND EXPRESSED WARM APPRECIATION FOR CANDID U. S. ASSESSMENT. OTHER THAN TO AFFIRM, WITH CONVICTION, IRANIAN DESIRE FOR CLOSER RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA AND NOTE AGAIN SLOWNESS OF SAUDI RESPONSES, HE MADE LITTLE COMMENT.

10. APRIL 22 THACHER LUNCED SAUDI AMBASSADOR' S RESIDENCE WITH KAMAL ADHAM. ADHAM SAID HE HAD SEEN SHAH AND FOUND LATTER

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INTERESTED IN PROBING FOR FURTHER STRENGTHENING SAUDI- IRANIAN TIES. SHAH INSISTED SAG IS PARTY WITH PLENTY OF MONEY AND THAT WITH HEAVY IRANIAN DEVELOPMENT BURDENS IN NATION OF LARGE POPULATION, IRAN HAS LITTLE TO SPARE FINANCIALLY FOR AID TO OMAN AND YAR. ADHAM SAID SHAH HAD DISCUSSED POSSIBILITY SOME KIND OF MUTUAL

ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT BETWEEN IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA, NOTING THAT SUCH PROJECT SHOULD BEGIN WITH SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN AND OTHER GULF STATES COULD THEN ADHERE LATER. SHAH DECLARED HE WAS THINKIN OF GOING TO VISIT KING FAISAL (SHAH ALSO COMMENTED ADVERSELY ON U. S. NAVAL PRESENCE IN GULF, DECLARING AMERICANS SHOULD EITHER

HAVE A FORCE OF REAL CONSEQUENCE OR PERHAPS WITHDRAW ENTIRELY).

11. COMMENT: FARTASH SEEMED INTERESTED ENOUGH IN SUGGESTION FOR APPROACH TO PRINCE SULTAN THAT WE MAY HOPE HE WILL TAKE ACTION EMBASSY INTENDS PURSUE MATTER FURTHER WITH HIM AFTER APPROPRIATE INTERVAL. AT NEXT MEETING WITH SULTAN AMBASSADOR THACHER WILL

REMARK ON IRANIAN INTEREST IN CLOSER LIAISON ON MILITARY AFFAIRS AFFECTING OMAN AND YAR AND WILL SEE WHAT INITIATIVES MIGHT BE ENCOURAGED FROM SAUDI SIDE POSSIBLY ALONG LINES SUGGESTED PARA 5 REFTEL B.

HELMS

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NMAFVVZCZ

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** SECRET

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 APR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973TEHRAN02867
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: TEHRAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730455/aaaajayo.tel
Line Count: 243
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 73 JIDDA 1618, 73 STATE 75780
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21-Dec-2001 by shawdg>; APPROVED <09-Jan-2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> srp 980206
Subject: SAUDI- IRANIAN COOPERATION -- THACHER DISCUSSION WITH FARTASH
TAGS: MASS, IR, SA
To: SS
STATE INFO ABU DHABI
AMMAN
JIDDA
KUWAIT
MULTIPLE
Type: TE

Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005